

Avian Influenza

Office of Epidemiology, Surveillance and Community Assessment CDHD

- Influenza A (H5N1) is an influenza virus that occurs mainly in birds, is highly contagious among birds, and can be deadly to them. Outbreaks among poultry are ongoing in a number of countries. As of August 23, 2006 there have not been any reported outbreaks in the U.S.
- While H5N1 does not usually infect people, human cases of H5N1 infection associated with outbreaks among poultry have been reported. Most of these cases have occurred from direct or close contact with infected poultry or surfaces contaminated by infected birds. *It is safe to eat properly cooked birds (i.e. chicken).*
- Human-to-human transmission of the H5N1 virus rarely occurs. Health authorities investigate possible cases of human-to-human transmission immediately.
- There is concern that H5N1 might mutate into a form that is easily transmitted from human to human. In that event, there could be a worldwide outbreak of influenza or what is called “pandemic influenza.”
- Ten nations have reported human cases of H5N1 since January 2004.
- As of August 23, 2006 241 human cases of H5N1 have been reported. There have been 141 deaths.
- Since December 2003, infections in poultry or wild birds have been reported from 48 countries. *The U.S. has imposed an import ban on poultry, wild birds and bird products from affected countries unless the products are certified non-infectious.*
- The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has provided safety guidance for hunting wild birds. Recommendations include: not handling obviously sick or dead birds, wearing latex gloves when handling or cleaning game, thorough hand washing and cleaning of knives, equipment and surfaces, and cooking all game meat thoroughly (to at least 165°). Go to the USDA website at www.uds.gov/wps/portal/usdahome and click on the *avian influenza link* for additional information.
- Although the H5N1 virus has not been found in the U.S. *it is important to remember that the virus can be present in the saliva, nasal secretions and feces of infected birds.* Therefore, it is a good idea to:
 - always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water (at least 20 seconds) after filling or cleaning bird feeders, after handling birds, or after playing in recreational waters or areas contaminated with bird feces
 - do not rub your eyes, handle food or smoke before washing your hands.
- Currently there are no travel restrictions to countries experiencing H5N1 outbreaks. However, travelers are encouraged to avoid areas such as poultry farms, live markets, etc. where birds and poultry are concentrated. They are advised to seek medical care if they develop flu-like symptoms.
- The federal government and all 50 states, including Idaho are working on pandemic influenza response plans.

Websites for additional information:

Pandemic Flu (U.S.) www.pandemicflu.gov

CDHD www.cdhd.idaho.gov

World Health Organization www.who.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov

U.S. Dept of Ag www.uds.gov/wps/portal/usdahome